

California State Prison - Solano

2007-2008 Solano County Grand Jury

Reason for Inspection

California Penal Code section 919, subdivision (b) provides: "The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county." Pursuant to the statute, the 2007-2008 Grand Jury inspected the California State Prison-Solano located at 2100 Peabody Road, Vacaville, California.

Grand Jury Actions

- Toured the facility
- Toured the Metal Fabrication Unit of the Prison Industry Authority
- Toured the Optical Laboratory Unit of the Prison Industry Authority
- Interviewed warden and staff
- Reviewed handout materials
- Reviewed California Corrections Standards Authority

Background /Summary

California State Prison-Solano (CSP-Solano) covers 146 acres. The prison opened in August of 1984, with a designed capacity of 2,610 inmates based on one person per cell. To accommodate the increase in prison population, gymnasiums are currently being used as dormitories. At the time of the Grand Jury's visit, the inmate population was 6,034 with a bed capacity at 6,302. Recently 150 inmates were transferred to out-of-state prisons due to overcrowding.

CSP- Solano is a medium risk facility housing level-two and level-three inmates. Level -two and level-three inmates must be kept separate. An inmate's level is based on an individual assessment of his crime and actions during incarceration. Level three inmates are a higher risk and require more security. According to prison administrative staff, CSP-Solano has a staff of approximately 1,400. The staff includes uniformed correctional officers, support staff, and medical personnel. At the time of the Grand Jury's tour, 11 percent of the uniformed officer positions were vacant, resulting in overtime. The facility operates on an annual budget of \$150 million. Inmate cost per year is estimated to be \$26,000.

There has been an increase in the amount of contraband, such as tobacco and drugs, taken into state correctional facilities. A relatively new problem confronting prison staff is the introduction of cellular phones into the prison. This creates additional security problems in that prisoners may be able to communicate escape plans, plan violent activities, plan drug deals or inappropriately contact people inside and outside the prison. Prison staff stated they would like to see that the passing of cellular phones to an inmate be considered a crime enabling the District Attorney to prosecute.

CSP-Solano's mission is to incarcerate, control and care for male felons while providing an opportunity for meaningful work, training and education. The Prison Industry Authority (PIA) is used to fulfill a part of the mission for the inmates. The PIA employs inmates and trains them to enhance their ability to obtain employment when they are released from prison.

Two of the programs offered under PIA at CSP-Solano are metal fabrication and optical manufacturing. The Metal Fabrication Unit is contained in a large updated fully functioning facility. It manufactures special vehicle equipment for Caltrans, prisoners' metal furniture and lockers for use throughout the California prison system. The program currently employs over 150 inmates. The recidivism rate for inmates trained in this unit is minimal; only one inmate has been re-incarcerated after receiving this training.

The Optical Laboratory manufactures prescription and safety eyewear for prison inmates, Youth Authority wards, Medicare and Medi-Cal patients, state hospitals and eligible state and local government employees. The laboratory employs approximately 100 inmates.

There is a long list of inmates waiting to fill these jobs. CSP-Solano is planning to expand the PIA and add an additional 150 inmates to this program.

CSP-Solano was licensed in June 2006 by the California Department of Health Services as a Corrections Treatment Center. The Center is able to house six chronically ill and nine mentally ill inmates for a maximum of 10 days. Those requiring longer treatment are sent to area hospitals or other facilities.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has outreach programs with local communities. CSP-Solano is involved in the development of these programs. Two examples are:

- The Prison Outreach Program, which cooperates with local schools and police departments to inform and show youths the consequences of unlawful behavior.
- The Victims Offender Reconciliation Program, which brings victims of violent crimes to prisons. The victims address inmates convicted of violent crimes and convey the facts that victims are real people and have suffered from the inmates' actions.

Religious services are available for those who wish to participate.

Findings and Recommendations

Finding 1 - The Prison Industry Authority program at California State Prison - Solano appears beneficial to the inmates while incarcerated and after their release.

Recommendation 1 - California State Prison - Solano should continue to develop and expand the Prison Industry Authority program.

Finding 2 - California State Prison-Solano has developed outreach programs with local communities.

Recommendation 2 - California State Prison-Solano should continue to develop and expand the outreach programs to all communities in Solano County.

Comments

The Grand Jury shares the concern of the staff that the introduction of cellular phones into the prison and the possession or use of cellular phones by prisoners should be a crime. We agree that the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation should seek legislation to make it a crime prohibiting the unauthorized possession, use or furnishing of cellular phones within a state prison.

The staff at California State Prison - Solano is working diligently to develop programs and is dedicated to its mission. The Grand Jury commends the warden and staff for their leadership and management in the operation of California State Prison - Solano.

Affected Agencies

- California State Prison-Solano

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- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation